



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

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Obama Administration Revamps Nuclear Policy

Washington — The Obama administration issued a new U.S. nuclear strategy April 6 that sharply narrows the use of nuclear weapons, but maintains their traditional role to deter a nuclear strike against the United States.

The Nuclear Posture Review was unveiled at a Pentagon briefing by Defense Secretary Robert Gates, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, Energy Secretary Steven Chu and Admiral Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The review of the nation's nuclear policy is the first

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Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton discuss the new Nuclear Posture Review with reporters.

Health Day Focuses on Helping Cities Weather Climate Change

By Cheryl Pellerin
Science Writer

Washington - The goal of World Health Day 2010, themed "1,000 Cities, 1,000 Lives," is to raise awareness about public health in urban areas. The message is critically important to hundreds of millions of city dwellers who already may be experiencing the health-threatening effects of climate change.



April 7 has been commemorated as World Health Day since 1950 to mark the

founding of the World Health Organization (WHO). Each year, WHO chooses a key global health issue and organizes international, regional and local events on the day and throughout the year to highlight the issue. For this year's campaign, events on urbanization and health will be organized worldwide April 7-11.

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Obama Administration Revamps Nuclear Policy . . .

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since 2001 and the third since the end of the Cold War two decades ago. A review of U.S. nuclear policy is conducted at the start of every new administration; it influences federal spending, treaties, weapon deployments and their eventual retirement over the next five to 10 years.

The new policy defines measures to strengthen the global nonproliferation regime, with emphasis on the importance of international treaties such as the 1970 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. And it specifically renews a U.S. commitment to hold accountable those who provide terrorists with nuclear weapons or the materials to make them.

"The NPR provides a road map for implementing President Obama's agenda for reducing nuclear risks to the United States, our allies and partners and the international community," Gates said at the Pentagon briefing. "This review describes how the United States will reduce the role and numbers of nuclear weapons with a long-term goal of a nuclear-free world."

Clinton told reporters the review is a milestone in transforming U.S. nuclear forces and the way in which the nation approaches nuclear issues.

"We are recalibrating our priorities to prevent nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism, and we are reducing the role and number of weapons in our arsenal, while maintaining a safe, secure and effective deterrent to protect our nation, allies and partners," she said.

Release of the strategy in Washington begins nine days of intensive nuclear diplomacy. Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev will meet in Prague April 8 to sign the new START treaty, de-

signed to limit both nations' nuclear arsenals to 1,550 warheads each, reduce deployed strategic delivery vehicles to 700, and limit deployed and nondeployed launchers to 800. Obama will host more than 40 world leaders at a nuclear security summit in Washington April 12–13 aimed at halting the spread of nuclear weapons and related technology.

Following this series of events, representatives from around the world will converge on the United Nations in New York May 3–28 for debate and review of the NPT, in part to determine if it needs to be amended or expanded. The review process is held approximately every five years.

NPR: FIVE KEY OBJECTIVES

At the Pentagon briefing, Gates told reporters that the Nuclear Posture Review includes significant changes to the U.S. nuclear posture. It focuses on five key objectives.

The policy emphasizes the prevention of nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism.

It reduces the role of nuclear weapons in American national security by committing the United States to not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against nonnuclear states that participate in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and are in compliance with its requirements. That policy includes instances of chemical and biological attack, but with some reservations.

While the United States agrees to reduce its nuclear arsenal in a new treaty with Russia, the policy will maintain the traditional role of strategic deterrence and stability of the nuclear arsenal and the means to deliver them by long-range missiles, nuclear submarines and heavy bombers.

NPR calls for a broadened regional security structure that includes missile defenses and improved conventional forces. The United States will retain the capability to forward-deploy U.S. nuclear weapons on fighter-bombers and heavy bombers.

The policy requires the United States to sustain a safe, secure and effective nuclear arsenal as long as nuclear weapons exist. But the United States will not conduct new nuclear testing, and will not develop new nuclear warheads.

DISSUADING COUNTRIES FROM DEVELOPING WEAPONS

The Obama administration is encouraging global compliance with the NPT. Under the treaty, countries with nuclear weapons agree to move toward disarmament, while countries without nuclear weapons agree not to acquire them, and all have the right to peaceful nuclear energy.

According to the text of the Nuclear Posture Review, "the United States will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against nonnuclear weapons states that are party to the NPT and in compliance with their nuclear nonproliferation obligations."

Speaking at the Pentagon April 6, Jim Miller, the principal deputy under secretary of defense for policy, said the vast majority of countries are compliant with the NPT. If any should decide to use chemical or biological weapons (CBW) against the United States, its partners or its allies, they "face the prospect of a devastating conventional military response," he said, rather than a nuclear attack. Miller said U.S. conventional forces and strike capabilities are developing additional capabilities to create greater deterrence for the use of CBW. However, he said the defense posture

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Health Day Focuses on Helping Cities Weather Climate Change . . .

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The vulnerability of human settlements — at a time when half the world's population lives in cities — is projected to increase due to the rising sea levels, inland floods, frequent and stronger tropical cyclones, periods of increased heat, and disease spread that climate change is beginning to generate.

"The emerging picture of the 21st century city fits many descriptions," United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon wrote in the forward of the U.N. Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) report, *The State of the World's Cities 2010/2011: Bridging the Urban Divide*.

"Some are centers of rapid industrial growth and wealth creation, often accompanied by harmful waste and pollution. Others are characterized by stagnation, urban decay and rising social exclusion and intolerance," he wrote. "Both scenarios point to the urgent need for new, more sustainable approaches to urban development. Both argue for greener, more resilient and inclusive towns and cities that can help combat climate change and resolve age-old urban inequalities."

CITIES AND CLIMATE CHANGE

By 2015, according to UN-Habitat, 952 million people (77 percent of the population) in the developed world will live in urban areas, along with 2.9 billion (48.7 percent) in developing regions.

In the world's teeming cities, climate change may damage infrastructure and limit access to basic urban services and health care. Most affected are the urban poor — slum dwellers in developing na-

tions.

To bolster climate change preparedness among cities in developing countries, UN-Habitat's Cities in Climate Change Initiative initially is working with the pilot cities of Esmeraldas, Ecuador; Kampala, Uganda; Maputo, Mozambique; and Sorsogon City, Philippines, to help develop innovative climate change strategies and

and levees to protect flood-prone neighborhoods. And institutional tools, such as zoning plans, are needed to improve governance and urban management.

In Kampala, the fast-growing capital of Uganda, new settlements, many of them informal, are set up in areas prone to flooding. Heavy reliance on wood and charcoal for heating and cooking contribute to air pollution and deforestation.



A view of Petare shantytown, one of Latin America's largest slums, in Caracas, Venezuela.

Because low- or neutral-energy housing is needed, the initiative is helping develop a housing code on energy efficiency. The city's ecosystem is under threat from wetland destruction, biodiversity loss and soil erosion. Ecosystem conservation and management are important components of climate change adaptation, and the initiative is analyzing the effects of climate change on women and children.

tools for local governments.

The initiative will help establish adaptation and mitigation policies and strategies, tools, financing mechanisms and partnerships.

For example, Esmeraldas, a coastal city in the northeastern corner of Ecuador, is seen as vulnerable to climate change mainly because of its location. Flooding and landslides in the rainy season and droughts in the dry season are likely to increase.

Initial assessments there found that adaptation to climate change in and around the city calls for a mix of land-use controls, infrastructure modifications, shifts in energy-use patterns, training and improved governance. Infrastructure modifications include building upstream water storage and flood control systems

Also under way are demonstration projects that include city greening, alternative energy briquette use, clean wood fuel use, climate-proofing of houses and buildings and energy-efficient urban transport systems.

According to UN-Habitat, more partner cities for the initiative are emerging in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Want to do something about climate change? Join the global conversation on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/ConversationsClimate>) or share your thoughts below.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

U.S. Eliminates Country-Based Scrutiny for Air Travelers

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — After consultations with governments and airline representatives, as well as U.S. intelligence and law enforcement personnel, the Obama administration has announced new security measures governing air travel to the United States that will screen all passengers based on real-time intelligence, thereby eliminating emergency measures that had focused on citizens from certain countries.

In an April 2 statement, the Department of Homeland Security said the new measures are designed to be more flexible and efficient, and are tailored to “reflect the most current information available to the U.S. government” as a means of ensuring the safety of travelers.

“The enhanced security measures that are going into effect are tailored to intelligence about potential threats and are focused on all passengers from all countries,” the statement said. The change eliminates special scrutiny for citizens of 14 countries that was implemented after the attempted bombing of a U.S.-bound airliner on December 25, 2009.

“Passengers traveling to the United States from international destinations may notice enhanced security and random screening measures throughout the passenger check-in and boarding process, including the use of explosives trace detection, advanced imaging technology, canine teams or pat downs, among other security measures,” the statement said.

Since the attempted bombing, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano has participated in regional aviation security meetings around the world to forge international agreements on “enhanced information collection and sharing, cooperation on technological development and modernized aviation security stan-

dards.” The statement said Napolitano has led a global initiative to strengthen airline security in conjunction with the U.N.’s International Civil Aviation Organization.

The State Department’s assistant secretary for public affairs, P.J. Crowley, told reporters April 2 that the new system also applies to American citizens, and includes strengthened watch-lists and more flexible security protocols to reflect the most current threat information.

“These changes came about through a rigorous interagency review process that included a number of government agencies including the Department of State, with input from partners in government and industry around the world, [the] intelligence community and law enforcement,” Crowley said.

“Many of our partners around the globe have also increased their own security measures, and the overall intent of this effort is to enforce and ensure the safety and security of everyone traveling by air

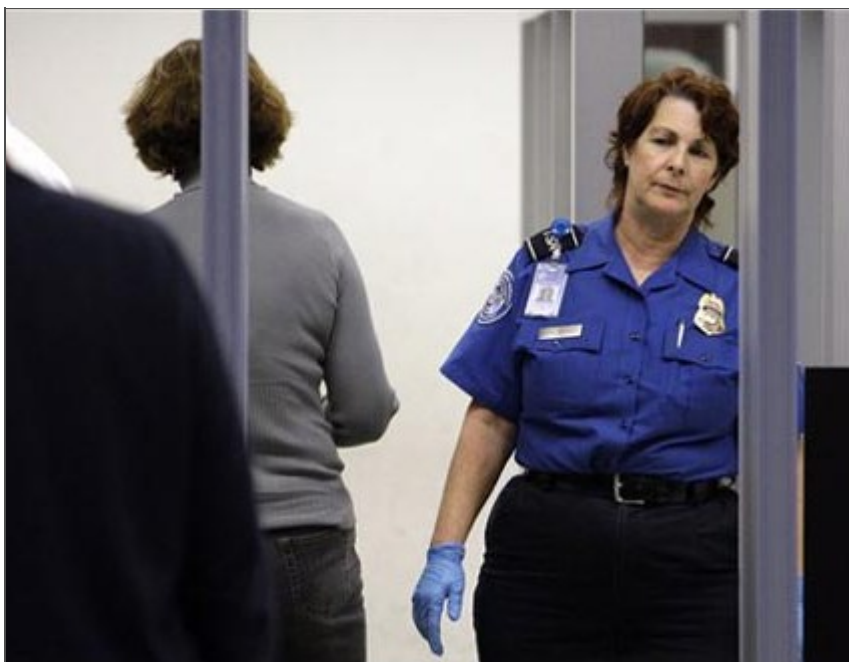
anywhere in the world,” he said.

“This new procedure ... is much more effective, much more efficient, much more concentrated on the threat as we see it, and will apply to all passengers coming to the United States,” he said.

A senior State Department official who asked not to be identified said the list of 14 countries had been “an understandable step” following the December 2009 attack and had been effective, but “there was a cost” in terms of the U.S. image.

“We have taken those concerns on board,” the official said. At the same time, air travel remains a prime target for terrorists and “we know someone’s going to try and attack it again.”

“We’re trying to put in place security that will protect everyone — American citizens as well as the citizens of the world — and we have found what we think is a better way to do that,” the official said. ♦



The new airline security measures emphasize the use of the most current intelligence and threat assessments.

Obama, Hu Discuss U.S.-China Relations

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama and Chinese President Hu Jintao spoke by telephone for about an hour April 1 on shared interests in stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and in protecting against the threat of nuclear terrorism.

The two world leaders also exchanged ideas about how best to deal with an Iranian regime that has not been forthcoming in explaining its nuclear development program, the White House said in a statement April 1 after Obama returned from Democratic Party fundraising events in the Northeast.

Earlier, the Chinese government announced that Hu would visit Washington April 12–13 to attend President Obama's Global Nuclear Summit. The summit is a significant part of achieving the president's vision of a world free of nuclear weapons.

The White House said the April summit "will be an important opportunity for them to address their shared interest in stopping nuclear proliferation and protecting against nuclear terrorism."

Hu's trip will also offer an opportunity for China and the United States to reduce recent tensions over economic, trade



President Obama, left, talks with Chinese President Hu at a state dinner in Beijing during a visit in November 2009.

and political issues, the White House said, adding that Obama and Hu "also discussed the importance of developing a positive bilateral relationship."

The United States and other Western partners have been working in recent months to increase pressure on the Iranian regime over its nuclear development program. The five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — have discussed imposing additional economic and political sanc-

tions on Iran. China has insisted on further efforts to reach the Iranian regime through diplomatic initiatives before resorting to a new round of sanctions.

"President Obama underscored the importance of working together to ensure that Iran lives up to its international obligations," the White House said after the two spoke for an hour by telephone from Air Force One. The presidential plane was held on the ground for about 10 additional minutes at Andrews Air Force Base outside Washington until the president completed the call.

Obama also discussed commitments made at the two summits of the Group of 20 in 2009. China, the United States and the other nations in the group pledged to implement new policies designed to produce balanced and sustainable growth, and to implement more stringent regulations for the financial sector.

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Obama Administration Revamps Nuclear Policy

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could be revised if the United States finds itself unable to cope with a growing threat from those weapons.

Miller said the Obama administration wants its defense posture to dissuade countries from developing nuclear weapons.

"If you are a country considering proliferation ... you put yourself in a different category with respect to our nuclear capabilities," he said. As the United States continues to develop its conventional and missile-defense capabilities to counter weapons of mass destruction, the hope is that "these states will see

less and less of an advantage to going down that path."

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Operations Under Way Against Taliban in Kandahar: Pentagon

By Meredith Buel
VOA News

Washington — The U.S. Defense Department says efforts to remove Taliban influence in Kandahar are well underway in advance of what is expected to be a major military operation in June against militants in southern Afghanistan.

Pentagon press secretary Geoff Morrell said U.S. troops for months have been doing the preparatory work for the operation against the Taliban in their spiritual home and birthplace of Kandahar.

Morrell said soldiers are securing routes in and out of the city, which has been rocked this month by suicide bombings and assassinations. "You're seeing additional shaping operations or you aren't seeing them. But they are underway in Kandahar proper by some of our special operations forces, who are right now engaging with tribal elements there, who are facilitating some of the shuras [meetings with tribal leaders] that are taking place, which are also a critical component to the shaping that's necessary for success in Kandahar, and who are also, of course, going after mid-level and high-level Taliban fighters who are holed up within Kandahar proper," he said.

Morrell declined to say when the military will begin significant fighting in the Kandahar region. U.S. officials in Afghanistan say the offensive is expected in June.

President Obama is sending 30,000 additional troops to Afghanistan this year — the bulk of whom are to be deployed in Taliban strongholds in the southern part of the country.

The scale of the American offensive in the Kandahar region is expected to be far greater than the recent attack on insurgents in Marjah, where thousands of U.S.



President Obama, right, shakes hands with U.S. troops at Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan during a surprise visit March 28.

Marines and Afghan Army soldiers began clearing the Taliban in February.

The Pentagon's Geoff Morrell says the Marines are continuing their operations in Marjah because there still is a Taliban presence there. "That is why our forces remain there and in the same kind of numbers that they were when this operation began. That is why, although we are now in the holding and the building phase of this operation, there is still clearing work that remains to be done. And we are still trying to root out Taliban who are dug in and hiding or blending in," he said.

U.S. officials in Afghanistan say the intense phase of the operation against the Taliban in Kandahar is expected to last about two months and is designed to be complete before the Muslim holy month of Ramadan begins in August.

Morrell says the Pentagon hopes the offensive will deal a fatal blow to the insurgency. "We certainly hope it will be one that will break the back, to a large

extent, of the Taliban who have called it home and who have used it as a sanctuary for some time. But I don't think that anybody is of the belief that that operation in and of itself will spell victory in Afghanistan," he said.

Analysts say the military operations in southern Afghanistan are a key test of President Obama's strategy for reversing the rise of the Taliban while protecting the Afghan population.

This report was provided by VOA News (<http://www.voanews.com/>).

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

Entrepreneur Brings the Internet, Health and Hope to The Gambia

By Phil Kurata
Staff Writer

Washington — A youth who grew up in The Gambia, a sliver of a country in West Africa, left home at age 16, a few months after his mother died, to study in Great Britain, and came back six years later with a degree in electrical engineering and a dream to enable his young compatriots to acquire higher education without having to leave home.

“Going to college meant that I had to grow up real fast,” Papa Yusupha Njie said. “The loss actually motivated me, and I never looked back. I made sure that I left the United Kingdom with excellent grades and honors degrees in electrical engineering and management.”

Njie’s academic credentials enabled him to land a secure, comfortable job as head of the information technology unit of the National Water and Electricity Company after his return to The Gambia. He stayed two years in that job. By 2000, he no longer could repress his entrepreneurial and humanitarian ambitions. He sold his car, persuaded several friends to lend him money and convinced a banker to grant him an overdraft allowance of \$2,500. “Venture capital is unheard of in our part of the world,” Njie said.

Njie used the money he borrowed to open a cybercafé.

“People were shocked when I left my job,” he said. “There was no guarantee that I would succeed. There were other players in the market with deeper pockets. The norm was for people to work at

one place till retirement with a salary guaranteed, company car, a good retirement package and other benefits.”

Njie used his cybercafé as an Internet training center for youths, holding intensive camps in the summer, when students were on break. “We had passion. We felt we knew a few things about technology that could make a difference in people’s lives,” Njie said.



Gambian entrepreneur Papa Yusupha Njie (left) with an unidentified staff member.

The café’s camps ran four to six weeks and trained young people in Web design and hosting, printing, and computer repair and maintenance. Young people learned to use search engines to find schools, scholarships and, of course, friends. The cybercafé, in addition, provided a place to educate young people about the danger of HIV/AIDS. “We produced and filmed the first HIV/AIDS documentary on The Gambia, which was broadcast on national television,” Njie

said.

Through the cybercafé, Njie launched Unique Solutions, a full-service information and communications technology company. Unique Solutions is building a wireless network that extends throughout The Gambia. For his efforts, Njie was named Young Entrepreneur of the Year 2006 by The Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry and two years later was nominated as Business Man of the Year 2008. He will come to Washington April 26 to be a delegate to the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship (<http://www.america.gov/st/development/english/2010/March/20100319163921cpataruk0.1110803.html?CP.rss=true>).

Njie’s vision for Unique Solutions is for it to become the first private Internet service provider that extends to every rural and urban area in the country. He feels that his decision to pursue the life of an entrepreneur in his homeland was the right one.

“Coming back home, I am one of a chosen few who have the opportunity to share my skills and knowledge with my community, and the entrepreneur in me tells me that, yes, I can make money doing it,” he said.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

Nigerian Cites Protection of Minorities as Big Plus in U.S.

By Jim Fisher-Thompson
Staff Writer

Washington — In addition to material attractions, educational opportunities and political openness, the United States is a beacon to the world because of its sense of social justice and protection of minorities, says Nigerian exchange student Bako Kantiok.

Since beginning graduate studies in communications at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, in September 2008, Kantiok told America.gov, he has learned that “social justice is very strong and is one of the major gifts we have here in America, the sense that your rights are protected and not just on paper. If anyone threatens you in any way, the authorities will respond and protect you.”

As a member of the Bajju people — a minority group in the middle belt of Nigeria — Kantiok said he experienced prejudice and discrimination in the past. “But here in

America, as a Nigerian, I feel the same as any other American who is from a European, African or Hispanic background. I am treated fairly and with respect. For me this is special. I don’t need to fear being judged because of the ethnic group or religion I belong to.”

Kantiok comes from near Plateau state in Nigeria — a melding ground between the predominantly Muslim north and Christian south. Cities in the region, Jos and Kaduna, periodically undergo communal violence fueled by ethnic and religious tension.

A critical factor underlying the turmoil, Kantiok said, is that “there is very little sense of social justice and trust in government — major reasons why people

turn on each other and take the law into their own hands.”

Before coming to America on a Ford Foundation fellowship, Kantiok attended Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria in northern Nigeria, where he received a bachelor of arts degree in drama and worked part time with Renaissance Theater Network, a nongovernmental organi-

knowledge and use of different media like the Internet, radio and television broadcasting, which “broadened the scope of the issues I believed can and should be addressed by people in the communications field.

“The media has a responsibility to further good governance,” he said. “This is an issue, especially regarding corruption, that has bedeviled Nigeria for a long time now.

“The press owes the Nigerian public the duty to be the watchdog of society and try as much as possible to expose cases and causes of corruption, because it is the bane of the Nigerian polity and economic system,” Kantiok said.

The student said he is doing his part by communicating with Nigerians about the U.S. society and how Americans deal with social problems through the Greetings From America radio

program, sponsored by the U.S. State Department.

The program follows the experiences of students from Nigeria, as well as from several other countries, who study in the United States. Kantiok said he has an audio recorder and does interviews that are broadcast weekly on Freedom Radio, a Nigerian station in Kano, Jigawa and Kaduna.

The programs, which began broadcasting in Nigeria in October 2008, are also broadcast on Ray Power Radio, Abuja; Rima Radio Sokoto; Plateau State Radio and Bauchi, according to the Web site. (<http://greetingsfromamerica.org/indexn.html>) ♦



Bako Kantiok speaks on health issues at the 2010 Ford IFP Fellows Conference at Ohio University.

zation that does shows for disadvantaged communities. He served for two years in the National Youth Service Corps working in Minna under the Nigerian State Council for Arts and Culture.

Kantiok said the greatest lesson he brought away from his first year at Ohio University is that “communication is essential to social change.” His curriculum’s focus on pragmatism impressed him the most, he said. “It’s not just about theory, but you get to experiment with different broadcast technologies and this allows you a measure of creativity.” His first year of studies included an internship working at the United Nations headquarters in New York City.

The Nigerian said he has expanded his

Senator Kerry Praises Rwandan-U.S. Student Exchanges

By Jim Fisher-Thompson
Staff Writer

Washington — Rwandan exchange students and their American counterparts from Massachusetts recently received encouragement from Senator John Kerry, the son of a U.S. foreign service officer, in their efforts to foster greater cultural understanding through examining the past.

“I’ve found as I’ve traveled around the world that cultural understanding and building relationships” are critical to world peace, Massachusetts Democrat Kerry told the 38 participants of the educational exchange program Facing History and Ourselves at a breakfast he hosted on Capitol Hill March 25.

“We have to face history and each other as individuals,” said the former 2004 presidential candidate, now chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, because “it’s critical to things that are right in moral and human terms.”

And “what you are engaged in,” he told the secondary school students, is “a very important person-to-person, grassroots effort because you can’t know where you’re going if you don’t understand where you’ve been.”

The students interacted over the past two years through mutual visits and communicated over the Internet, examining “what makes a community strong and what can tear it apart,” explained Margot Strom, executive director of Facing History and Ourselves.

The U.S. students from Massachusetts visited Rwanda in July 2009, and their Rwandan counterparts reciprocated with a March 2010 visit to the United States as part of the overall two-year exchange program, which is funded by the State Department’s Bureau of Educational and



U.S. teacher Emily Smyth and Rwandan student Pacifique Ndayishimye attend a March 25 breakfast hosted by Senator John Kerry.

Cultural Affairs (<http://exchanges.state.gov/>).

In Rwanda, the Americans discussed and toured sites of the 1994 genocide that killed upwards of 800,000 Rwandans. During their U.S. tour, the Rwandans were immersed in an examination of the U.S. civil rights movement of the 1960s.

At the Senate breakfast, members of both student groups shared their experiences and danced to traditional Rwandan folk music, wearing Rwandan dress.

Elizabeth Brederson, a student at Hudson High School in Hudson, Massachusetts, told America.gov the Americans’ visit to Kigali last year was “truly amazing. We grew together by learning the importance of community, and it was surprising how quickly we all came together and supported each other.”

Saying “the world came too late and too slow” to assist Rwanda in 1994, Kerry urged the students to continue to find ways to bridge “levels of misunder-

ing” that can still occur between nations and groups.

“These challenges don’t go away,” he told the youths. “I wish people behaved better, and hopefully they will because of efforts like yours.”

Facing History and Ourselves is an international nongovernmental organization dedicated to engaging students from different backgrounds and countries in an examination of racism, prejudice and anti-Semitism. The organization reaches 1.9 million students a year through a network of 50,000 educators worldwide. Its Web site (<http://www.facinghistory.org/>) counted more than 700,000 visits from people in 215 countries and 2.6 million page views in 2009.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

Maryland County Celebrates Arab-American Heritage

By M. Scott Bortot
Staff Writer

Washington — It all began with a phone call from Samira Hussein in 1998.

In the late 1990s, the Palestinian-born American was active in a community multicultural group. Each member would host a gathering that highlighted their culture, usually at a restaurant.

When Hussein suggested holding an Arab heritage night, she learned from group members that Arabs, unlike some other ethnic groups, did not have an officially sanctioned heritage month in Maryland.

Hussein, a resident of Montgomery County, Maryland, sprang into action. Determined to honor her heritage, she phoned county officials to request an Arab-American heritage month.

The next day, Hussein received a phone call from the Montgomery County Executive's Office and with it came good news: Arab American Heritage Month in Montgomery County was born.

"I was so excited by this that I got my husband, my children, three or four other people who I could find on very short notice," Hussein said. "And we showed up at County Executive Douglas Duncan's office and I accepted a proclamation." Nearly 15 years later, Hussein continues to accept proclamations from Montgomery County that honor its citizens of Arab heritage. On March 31, county officials presented Hussein's Arab American Heritage Month Committee with a proclamation.

"I, Isiah Leggett, as County Executive, proclaim April 2010 as Arab American Heritage Month in Montgomery County, Maryland," reads the proclamation. "I encourage our residents to join us in recognizing the achievements of the Arab-American community and to participate in the month's celebrations."

San Francisco celebrates its Arab American Heritage Month in October and Chi-

ago honors Arab Americans throughout November.

Georgetown University's director of educational outreach at the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Zeina Azzam Seikaly, honored American women of Arab heritage, including actress Salma Hayek and late astronaut Christa McAuliffe.



County Executive Ike Leggett presents a proclamation to Samira Hussein and other members of the Arab American community, declaring the month of April as Arab American Heritage Month and encouraging residents and visitors to participate in the month's celebration and learn more about the diverse communities in Montgomery County.

Next came Mazen Basrawi, the counsel to the U.S. assistant attorney general for civil rights. "I'm very proud of what I've seen my government do the last few months to defend the rights of Arab Americans," he said. "We are litigating two cases right now concerning two women who want to wear religious hair covering in the workplace."

Basrawi, who was appointed to his position by U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, works on issues relating to disability, racial and religious discrimination.

Arab American Heritage Month features a festival organized by Hussein and her Arab American Heritage Committee that highlights Arab culture. This year's festival, to be held April 11 under the theme "In Unity, We Build a Caring Community," will showcase poetry readings, arts and crafts, calligraphy exhibits, dancing and Middle Eastern food.

Sponsored by the City of Gaithersburg's Multicultural Affairs Committee, the festival is attended by the mayor and city

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Citizen or Not, the U.S. Census Counts Everyone

By Jane Morse
Staff Writer

Washington — The U.S. Census Bureau has kicked off its monumental \$14.5 billion effort to get an exact count of the estimated 309 million people living in the United States. It seeks to include everyone: citizens and noncitizens, those with permanent residences and transients alike.

The U.S. Constitution says the “resident population” — not just U.S. citizens — should be counted, says Daniel Weinberg, Census Bureau assistant director for decennial census programs. The one exception is foreign ambassadors and staff who live in embassy compounds, he said, because that is technically foreign soil.

In a briefing at the Foreign Press Center in Washington March 26, Weinberg explained that the Constitution mandates a full count of the U.S. population every 10 years to ensure that Americans are fairly represented in the U.S. Congress.

Population determines how many representatives a state can send to the House of Representatives. The more populous states are allowed more representatives, and, by extension, more potential political clout. (Each state has a minimum of one representative.)

Another reason for the census is “to draw the districts so that they’re of equal size,” Weinberg said. Each person in the House of Representatives represents a district in his or her state, and each district in a state must include the same number of people. States often redraw their districts — both for the U.S. Congress and their own legislatures — based on the census findings.

No matter what their status, all immigrants are included in the population



A child eats a hot dog at an event in Galveston, Texas, where residents learn about the importance of participating in the 2010 Census.

calculations for seats in the House of Representatives. “Everybody should be counted,” said Weinberg, adding that “the courts have upheld the current interpretation for centuries.”

The census also has a big financial impact on everyone living in the United States. The federal government uses the census figures to determine how much communities will receive of more than \$400 billion allocated in federal funds each year. These funds help pay for hospitals, job training centers, schools, senior centers, emergency services and public works projects such as bridges and tunnels.

REACHING OUT TO IMMIGRANTS AND MINORITY POPULATIONS

Weinberg acknowledged that many immigrants living in the United States without proper documentation may be afraid to have any contact with federal authorities. The Census Bureau tries to reach these reluctant respondents through

advertising and in partnership with activists, ethnic church leaders and others who are trusted by people in the immigrant communities. The census questionnaire is available in six different languages, and language assistance guides are available in a total of 60 languages.

“That’s a challenge: to reach people who don’t speak English as a primary language,” Weinberg said. “It’s not easy, but we really make an effort to reach all of them.”

The Census Bureau goes to “extreme lengths” to protect the identity of anyone who responds to the census questionnaire, Weinberg said. The Census Bureau personnel who collect and process the information “are sworn for life to protect the confidentiality of these data,” he said. “We do protect these individual responses; [we] put out basically just tables, just tabulations, and not even the Patriot Act can override these pro-

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U.S. Offers \$1.15 Billion for Haitian Recovery

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — International assistance for Haiti is essential not only for its long-term recovery from the January 12 earthquake, but also to address cross-border challenges, such as economic migration, human and drug trafficking, and drug-resistant disease, resulting from the country's continued impoverishment, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said.

In remarks at the opening of an international donor's conference for Haiti in New York March 31, Clinton announced a \$1.15 billion pledge of U.S. assistance for the country. Haitian President René Préal has set a target of \$3.8 billion to meet his country's needs for the next 18 months.

"This money will go toward supporting the government of Haiti's plan to strengthen agriculture, energy, health, security and governance," Clinton said, as well as for cooperation with civil-society groups, private businesses, non-governmental organizations and Haitian citizens. She added that U.S. assistance will also seek to empower Haitian women, which "will fuel the long-term economic recovery and progress not only for them but for their families."

Clinton said the earthquake had wiped out the results of recent reform efforts that had caused Haiti's economy to grow 3 percent in 2009 and generated new job opportunities.

But "the people of Haiti never gave up," she said. Clinton expressed her confidence in their continued resilience and Haiti's leadership. Haiti cannot recover on its own, and the international community now faces a choice of helping the country become "an engine for progress and prosperity," or watching its economic, health and infrastructure chal-



Secretary Clinton praised the resilience of the Haitian people but said they need effective international assistance to recover.

lenges continue to create misery that will affect not only the Haitian people, but also the global community, she said.

"The lack of sanitation services could cause outbreaks of lethal illnesses, and the lack of reliable medical services could give rise to new drug-resistant strains of disease that will soon cross borders," she said. Drug trafficking and human trafficking, already thriving in tenuous security conditions, will "indirectly affect us all."

Although Haiti has received international assistance in the past, "we cannot do what we've done before," Clinton said. Haiti's government must guide a "strong, accountable and transparent recovery," and donors must "offer our support in a smarter way" through long-term investments in partnership with the government, which will be more effective than "a scattered array of well-meaning projects."

"Let us say here with one voice: We will pass this test," Clinton told fellow donors.

President Préal thanked the conference for the rapidly mobilized assistance that materialized from all over the world following the disaster. He said the Haitian people had been deeply touched "by this movement of solidarity and compassion." He also called for a United Nations emergency force that could quickly deploy in response to natural disasters anywhere in the world.

Préal made a special appeal for assistance in the area of education, which he said is "the prerequisite for development." He said 38 percent of Haitians above the age of 15 are illiterate, 25 percent of school-age children are not enrolled, and those who are in school do not have the resources available to develop genuine life skills. This left the country unprepared to adequately respond to the disaster, he said.

"The earthquake clearly demonstrated this social fracture," he said, and Haitian society "can no longer tolerate" the situation and must repair it "as rapidly as possible."

He envisioned a renewed country as a center of knowledge that celebrates its cultural and linguistic diversity, stemming from its French, English and African past, where all Haitians can provide for their own welfare and receive assistance from qualified individuals.

"Let us dream of a new Haiti whose fate lies in a new society without exclusion, that has overcome hunger, in which all have access to decent shelter, health provided according to their needs, quality education," where its people can contribute toward the good of all mankind, Préal said.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon opened the conference by welcoming a "concrete, specific and ambitious" plan developed by Haitian and international

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New Policies Help U.S. Address Climate Change

By Karin Rives
Staff Writer

Washington — The Obama administration is implementing new fuel efficiency standards for cars — the first nationwide greenhouse gas emissions rules for vehicles in U.S. history.

The new standards, established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of Transportation, will affect new cars that hit the market as soon as next year and gradually increase efficiency to 34.1 U.S. miles per gallon (14.5 kilometers per liter) by 2016. That will cap emissions at 250 grams of carbon dioxide per mile, or per 1.6 kilometers.

Cars, minivans, pickup trucks and so-called sport-utility vehicles (SUVs) account for nearly 60 percent of all transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions in the United States. This means that even though the new standards won't match those adopted by Europe, they will have a profound effect, saving the United States 1.8 billion barrels of oil between 2012 and 2016, the EPA said in a press statement.

"This is a victory for our planet and everyone who knows that we must take action today and not push the challenge of climate change off to the next generation," said Lisa Jackson, administrator of the EPA, which is implementing the new standards under the United States' Clean Air Act. "We expect to reduce greenhouse emissions by the equivalent of 42 million cars over the life of the program."

While these new cars may cost the consumer more up front, American drivers stand to save as much as \$3,000 on fuel over the life of their 2016 model cars, Jackson said. The Clean Air Act, a law passed in 1970, tasked EPA with protecting the quality of U.S. air. A 2007 Supreme Court ruling part of that responsi-



Light vehicles produce 60 percent of transportation emissions.

bility, the agency has the authority to regulate greenhouse gas emissions.

While regulating car emissions is one part of its work under the act's authority, EPA announced March 29 that it intends to require factories and other large "stationary facilities" to get Clean Air Act permits for their emissions, beginning in 2011.

A NEW DOMESTIC SOURCE OF OIL AND GAS

On March 31, President Obama unveiled a plan to allow offshore drilling for oil and natural gas in the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico. This move, which drew some criticism from environmental groups, is needed to make the nation less dependent on foreign oil and ensure a stable energy supply in coming decades, Obama said.

"There will be those who strongly disagree with this decision," he acknowledged. "But what I want to emphasize is that this announcement is part of a broader strategy ([\[www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/obama-administration-announces-comprehensive-strategy-energy-security\]\(http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/obama-administration-announces-comprehensive-strategy-energy-security\) \) that will move us from an economy that runs on fossil fuels and foreign oil to one that relies more on home-grown fuels and clean energy."](http://</p></div><div data-bbox=)

The new plan also affirmed that there will be no drilling off the Pacific coast, or in Alaska's Bristol Bay, which U.S. environmental groups long have opposed.

"Moving toward clean energy is about our security. It's about our economy. And it's about the future of our planet," Obama said. "And what I hope is that the policies we've laid out — from hybrid fleets to offshore drilling, from nuclear energy to wind energy — underscore the seriousness with which my administration takes this challenge. It's a challenge that requires us to think and act anew."

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

Country Measurements Critical to Greenhouse Gas Tracking

This is the second article in a series on how scientists measure carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and why nations are working together to improve this capability.

By Cheryl Pellerin
Science Writer

Washington — The need for industrialized countries to measure and report their greenhouse gas emissions has increased with each international effort to address climate change.

Today, with 110 nations — developed and developing — pledging to reduce emissions and allow the reductions to be monitored and verified under the Copenhagen Accord ([http://www.america.gov/st/energy-english/2009/Decem-](http://www.america.gov/st/energy-english/2009/Decem-ber/20091222131726lcniellep0.1802179.html)

[ber/20091222131726lcniellep0.1802179.html](http://www.america.gov/st/energy-english/2009/Decem-ber/20091222131726lcniellep0.1802179.html)), it never has been more important for countries to estimate their emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane and other greenhouse gases.

“We’ve been making very accurate observations of greenhouse gases since the late 1950s, but that’s a global average,” said Riley Duren, chief systems engineer for NASA’s Earth Science and Technology Directorate at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California, at a March 4 briefing in Washington. “It gives us one number — it tells us nothing about where the emissions are coming from, even on a hemispherical level.”

The first guidelines for developed countries to measure their national emissions began taking shape in 1994 with the entry into force of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC (<http://unfccc.int/2860.php>)). While this treaty established guidelines for

measuring and reporting, it set no limits on emissions. The guidelines were based on methods developed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) for estimating greenhouse gas emissions (<http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/>).

The guidelines were strengthened under the Kyoto Protocol (http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/items/2830.php), said Dennis Tirpak, senior fellow at the World Resources Institute. The protocol, which was ratified by 190 countries and international entities and entered into force in 2005, is a legally binding agreement under which industrialized countries pledge to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases. The United States did not ratify the protocol, but is a party to the UNFCCC.

“The protocol requires a very detailed format for how countries are to report,” Tirpak said, “and the U.N. complemented

the issue of reporting guidelines with a fairly rigorous system of review of those inventories. The inventories are reviewed every year by technical experts.”

CONTINUOUS REVIEW

The methods used and data submitted by industrialized countries are reviewed in one of three ways, Tirpak said. Experts travel as a group to a country, ask a lot of questions and examine the processes used to collect data. Or experts review a country’s inventory documents without traveling to that country. Or a pool of experts meets in Bonn, Germany, where the U.N. secretariat resides, and reviews several country submissions at a time.

“That process assures some level of consistency and transparency but it does not necessarily insure accuracy,” said Tirpak, who also is past director of the Global Change Policy Division at the U.S. Envi-

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On a billboard in New York, a digital display helps viewers track greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere.

Country Measurements Critical to Greenhouse Gas Tracking . . .

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Environmental Protection Agency (<http://www.epa.gov/>) (EPA). “We don’t know for sure that every bit of data is correct.”

There is no similar system for developing countries, he said. “Developing countries come together and exchange experiences and information, but we don’t have experts go to developing country sites.”

Supplementing the inventory review process is a report called a national communication, requested by the UNFCCC from developed and developing countries every three years. In these documents, developed countries report on steps they are taking to implement the treaty. Developing countries, in accordance with the treaty’s principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities,” have less stringent deadlines and requirements.

U.S. GREENHOUSE GASES

In the United States, the EPA produces an annual greenhouse gas inventory. An inventory is an accounting of the amount of greenhouse gases emitted to or removed from the atmosphere. Greenhouse gas removals can come from projects that capture CO₂ from an industrial site and store it deep underground or from projects that use methane captured from landfill operations to produce heat or electricity. Policymakers use greenhouse gas inventories to track emission trends and develop strategies. Scientists use greenhouse gas inventories as inputs to atmospheric and economic models.

Without requiring industrial facilities to quantify their greenhouse gas emissions, the agency has tracked the national trend in emissions and removals since 1990 and prepares an official U.S. greenhouse gas inventory (<http://epa.gov/>

[climatechange/emissions/usinventoryreport.html](http://epa.gov/climatechange/emissions/usinventoryreport.html)). It is submitted annually to the UNFCCC secretariat. EPA also works with developing countries to improve the accuracy and sustainability of their greenhouse gas inventories.

In 2009, EPA finalized the first mandatory U.S. greenhouse gas reporting requirement (<http://www.america.gov/st/energy-english/2010/March/20100324111854abretnuh0.194607.html>). The rule requires 31 industry sectors covering 85 percent of U.S. emissions to track and report their emissions. William Irving, chief of the Program Integration Branch in the EPA’s Climate Change Division, said the first data from the program will be available in 2011.

According to EPA, this system will provide a better understanding of where greenhouse gases are coming from and will guide development of the best possible policies and programs to reduce emissions.

The new mandatory reporting requirement, Irving said, is the most comprehensive greenhouse gas reporting program in the world.

See also “Nations Share Expertise to Measure Greenhouse Gases (<http://www.america.gov/st/energy-english/2010/April/20100402094849lcnirellep0.2227899.html>).”

Want to do something about climate change? Join the global conversation on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/ConversationsClimate>) or share your comments below.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

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Telling America's story

Maryland County Celebrates Arab-American . . .

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council members. Hussein said that last year's festival drew more than 500 people despite heavy rains.

"We are on the main highway and people join us after coming from church, and the smell of the food attracts people," Hussein said. Some years the festival is not held because of the amount of work involved for her small committee. "We use our husbands and our children to set up and clean up," she said.

A major part of Arab American Heritage Month is teaching. With support from the local board of education, Hussein's committee highlights Arab heritage by placing books, posters and Arab clothing in schools and public libraries county-wide.

Hussein also spearheaded a 30-minute educational presentation on Arab Americans that was shown for several years throughout the school system.

"Last year we had many requests to feature Arab culture, but we could only do so many," Hussein said. ♦

**U.S. Offers \$1.15 Billion for
Haitian Recovery . . .**

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officials to build a "new Haiti" with better schools and health services, and better options for its people than choosing between unemployment and migration.

The plan calls for a trust fund to determine how to spend aid money and a commission to oversee reconstruction work, such as rebuilding schools, hospitals and government offices, as well as returning farms to production and other job creation efforts.

Along with continued emergency assistance, especially for shelter as Haiti copes with its rainy season, Ban estimated that the country will need \$11.5 billion over the next 10 years. ♦

Citizen or Not, the U.S. Census Counts Everyone . . .

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tections."

"We do share the data with the National Archives (<http://www.archives.gov/>), and they keep them confidential as well," Weinberg said. The individual records are not released to the public for 72 years, and this old data forms the basis for a lot of genealogical research, such as tracing family trees.

The census questionnaire for 2010 has only 10 questions, which are about the age, sex, race and ethnic heritage of the respondent. This year, for the first time, an English-Spanish questionnaire was mailed to about 13 million households. "We think that will improve response rates in the heavily Hispanic neighborhoods," Weinberg said.

Questions about religious affiliation are prohibited by U.S. law. The religion data the Census Bureau publishes in its statistical abstracts is assembled from reports provided by religious organizations, he said.

The data collected via the short questionnaire will be supplemented by the American Community Survey, which regularly collects more detailed information from samples of residents throughout the country. About 3 million people participate each year, Weinberg said.

Late in April approximately 700,000 census workers, or "enumerators," will begin to visit households that didn't return the short questionnaire to make sure they are counted, Weinberg said. Some work at night, visiting places "where the homeless might congregate and try and get them counted," he said.

A transcript and video of Weinberg's presentation (<http://fpc.state.gov/139128.htm>) are available on the State Department Web site. Also see the Census Bureau's Web page on data confidentiality (<http://2010.census.gov/2010census/privacy/index.php>).

See also: "Looking for a Full Count in U.S. Census (<http://www.america.gov/st/usg-english/2010/February/20100205084211cjinorab0.2436334.html>)."

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦